PRESIDENTS OF LIFE COS. MEET AND DISCUSS LEGISLATION.

Grover Cleveland, Looking Well, Tells Them There's Too Much Regulation and Darwin P. Kingsley Attacks the Armstrong Law, Walle Armstrong Listens.

Grover Cleveland, appearing to be in good health and spirits, as chairman opened the deliberations of the first annual meeting of the Association of Life Insurance Presidents at the Hotel Belmont yesterday afternoon. Mr. Cleveland read an address on the present situation of life insurance as regulated by recent legislation and kept his place behind the speaker's stand until the meeting adjourned after 6 o'clock.

Aside from the lengthy and at times vehement outline of evils that have arisen from too much regulation of insurance companies delivered by Mr. Cleveland, the address of Darwin P. Kingsley, president of the New York Life Insurance Company, upon the fight between the big New York companies and the Legislature of 1906, which passed the Armstrong law. was the feature of the afternoon's session.

Mr. Kingslev hit out from the shoulder at the work of the Armstrong committee and the features of the Armstrong bill.

strong said afterward to the reporters. "Of course it would have been a marvel if the Armstrong bill was perfect. I am glad to hear how imperfect some people think

State Insurance Commissioner Kelsev was

also an interested listener to the speeches of the afternoon. He said that he was only there to listen and had nothing to say.' Aside from Mr. Kelsey, insurance commissioners from ten States were present. Speaker Ekern of the lower house of the Wisconsin Legislature, whose recent insurance legislation has caused great commotion among the insurance companies, was there. Among the presidents of insurance companies were George K. Johnson of the Penn Mutual, John M. Taylor of the Connecticut Mutual, Charles A. Peabody of the Mutual, Paul Morton of the Equitable, Dr. Leslie D. Ward of the Prudential, Robert W. Huntington, Jr., of the Connecticut

Morgan H. Bulkelev of the Ætna Life. " Ex-President Cleveland began his speech with a strong plea for honesty and integrity in the insurance business, telling the presidents that they could not afford at any time, particularly while the present searching investigations of Legislatures were on, to lose caste with the people through broken promises or delusive misrepresentations.

General Life, and United States Senator

"Those that control life insurance companies should be absolutely and disinterestedly devoted to the interests of the assured. he said. "And the relations between policyholders and their companies should be friendly, trustful and cooperative. Laws professedly regulating life insurance should be free from senseless resentment, predatory acquisitiveness or demagogic appeal.

Mr. Cleveland said that it would be folly to blink at or avoid the disgraceful fact that dislocation of these ideal conditions began in "the faithlessness of those occupying places of greatest influence in life insurance circles and the self-invited discredit and humiliation of some of the largest and strongest companies in life insurance leader-

The speaker pointed out that what these certain leaders in insurance circles had invited had been visited upon the heads of all egislation, and added

Some of the legislation is so pulpably remedial and so wisely restrictive that all life insurance companies who really desire the reform of abuses should welcome it as in aid of their efforts in that direction. Some of it, while more drastic and not so plainly necessary, makes obedience not impossible.

But this is not the entire story. Sometime when uprisings, beginning with a moral awakening, passing from stage to stage reach a hand to hand conflict of violence and deadly blows there appears on the scene the noisy adventurer who speks leadership in the confusion and clauser of the fight, while in his wake others more quiet and stealthy but none the less diligent filch from the wounded and helpless.

Continuing the figure, Mr. Cleveland said that in many States demagogues, while playing upon the desire of honest men for reform, pass vicious and unreasonable laws to serve their own petty political, ends. Certain Legislatures had taken advantage of the general hue and cry to squeeze the insurance companies of inordinate amounts of taxation under pretence of reformatory measures. He went

Life insurance companies not accused of wrongdoing but caught in the storm of virulent and indiscriminate attack have, as well as the guilty, failed to find friends in quarters where they should have found them, and their policyholders, who should have allies and defenders, have by the thousands been quite willing to join the ranks

Mr. Cleveland contented himself with

Mr. Cleveland contented himself with stating the facts of the insurance situation, saying that he would wait to hear what others peakers had to say in the matter of suggestion and remedy.

Darwin P. Kingsley, president of the New York Life Insurance Company, addressed the meeting on the subject "New York State and Life Insurance Legislation." He reviewed the Armstrong bill and the work of the committee that forand the work of the committee that for-mulated it. He grouped the salient feat-ures of the measures under nine general heads and proceeded to take up each one

"It would have been a new thing in legislation," said Kingsley in his introduction, "if this State in 1906 had been able to strike into a new field and enact a body of laws that should prove wholly wise and bene-ficial." Then the speaker began to point

ficial." Then the speaker began to point out without mincing words wherein the Armstrong legislation had failed of being either wise or beneficial.

He disclaimed the purpose of advocating any modification of recent insurance legislation in the matter of the election of directors in mutual companies. But he asked his heavers if it was consistent with extended to the consistent with extended his hearers if it was consistent with experience and sound policy to limit the service of directors in mutual companies to two years, thus leaving the companies exposed in frequently recurring intervals to the perils of an election such as those held in the Mutual Life and New York Life since the enforcement of the Armstrong legislation. He went on:

The result of the election in the case of the Mutual Life was announced about five months after the polls closed, and in the case of the New York Life almost exactly six months after the polls closed. The necessary expenses in the case of the latter company— expenses paid by the policyholders—were over \$200,000. The law was so imperfed that many thousands of policyholders were disfranchised through their inability to understand the complications of the ballot. Without imputing unworthy motives to any one, it is proper to note the fact that the records of the District Attorney's office in New York county show that the opportunity for control of these great corporations constituted a temptation so alluring that the Grand Jury has charged certain men with conspiracy and forgery in connection with the ballots.

Turning to the provisions of the Arm-

strong legislation in the matter of policies. Mr. Ringsley said that in his opinion it was radically wrong to inhibit a company's issuing at the same time policies on the participating and non-participating plan. He said:

The Armstrong committee said that if premiums for non-participating insurance are fixed by a mutual company at a rate lower than the actual cost of carrying the insurance including a fair share of expenses, it is an imposition upon the other policyholders; if, on the other band, premiums are charged ata rate higher than that demanded by the cost of carrying the insurance the excess is without excuse, and those who take the policies are overcharged and deprived of the returns to which they should be entitled.

If this argument is good against non-participating business by a participating company it is good against all non-partici-pating business. Under this logic every non-participating rate is either too high or too low. In fact the committee said in so words that a non-participating policy issued by a mutual company could be justified upon the supposition that the exact results of the business can be foreseen. course that is an impossibility. But why is it any more improper for participating policyholders in a company to insure a man's life at a price on which they are safe and on which they may make a slight profit than it is for stockholders to do the same thing? Wherein is it inherently wrong?

On the other hand a life insurance company, so long as it does its business honestly and openly and under the supervision of the State, should offer any form of policy which may appeal to the insurant and which will do no one else any injury.

Senator Armstrong, who sat behind one of the curtains near the entrance to the parlor in which the session was being held, smiled broadly when Mr. Kingsley, after finishing his speech, happened to stumble over him on the way out.

"I have been greatly interested in all that I have heard this afternoon," Mr. Armstrong said afterward to the reporters. of the insurance companies' business met with insurance men's greatest approval. But when the Legislature of 1906 took up the matter of putting certain limitations on the scope of insurance business and legitimate practice it went far afield and blundered hopelessly, in the opinion of the speaker. Upon Section 16 of the Armstrong bill, which puts limitations on new business, and which, as the speaker asserted, represented the conviction of the asserted, represented the conviction of the committee that some of the companies were getting too big to be honest, Mr. Kingsley uncorked the largest vials of his

Quoting from a joint Senate and Assembly committee report of February 22, 1906, which says that the three big New York companies if allowed to grow unrestrained companies if allowed to grow unrestrained would become a serious menage to the community, Mr. Kingsley asked if the sense of the Legislature was that if we should find dishonesty in the administration of the industrial development of the nation or in the handling of the national defence we should immediately throw over all idea of maintaining such development and such defence. "He added:

Yet here was a group of distinguished citizens who advanced exactly this kind of philosophy when brought face to face with certain natural problems developed in the management of inherently beneficent and constructive institutions. They reported extravagant commissions, extravagant administration, evidence of lobbying and many other things of which they disapproved and

which met general public reprobation.

But admit the existence of all the offences the committee charged, and suppose that all the press imagined about the situation was true, and suppose that more than the committee discovered and more than the press imagined was also true, even then their con-clusion as embodied in their principal remedy was a non sequitur. It was a colossal economic The remedy proposed bore no relation to the offence. Extravagances in the name of beneficence have been committed before. but that is no reason for condemning benefi-Bad practices where methods should be correct and scrupulous were not unprec-Inefficient men have been dis covered in the service of the noblest of human

These conditions have always existed. They are incidents which attach to all en-deavor, developments which must always be guarded against, which go with the evolution of every complicated form of society. because these conditions persistently arise no constructive statesman has suggested that limitations should be put upon the particular companies seven fold in indiscriminate forms of activity to which the evils attach particular represent the methods of the de-

structionist and not those of the reformer.

The conclusion of the committee that the way to cure excrescences was to destroy the thing itself, the way to check evil practices was to limit the operation of an institution which in itself was thoroughly useful and desirable, was based on very bad logic.

Mr. Kingsley closed his speech by say ing that it was incumbent on the State to repeal no law which makes the insurance companies sound honest and open to the fullest publicity; but that the State should see to it that those portions of the recent enactment which seem to take it for granted that officers of New York insurance com-panies are more likely to be criminals than

panies are more likely to be criminals than other men should be repealed.

Paul Morton, president of the Equitable Life, spoke on the proper method of valuation of fixed term securities owned by the life insurance companies in preparing the reports of the company's assets for the State insurance department. Mr. Morton said that the finance committee of the association had become convinced that market quotations of insurance assets could not be taken as a fair valuation since the company bought its bonds for investment with the intention of holding them until maturity.

maturity.
"It would seem," said the speaker, "a much fairer plan to base the values upon

much fairer plan to base the values upon an average market value for some given length of time, to be determined upon according to the prevailing conditions. There are times in periods of excitement caused by strikes, politics, rumors of wars very high or low rates for call loans and many other causes besides demand and supply which materially aid in bringing about fictitious quotations."

William Bro Smith, counsel of the Travellers Insurance Company, spoke of recent insurance legislation in Wisconsin, a subject also touched upon by a representative of Frederick Frelinghuysen, president of the Mutual Benefit Company of New Jersey. Charles Jerome Edwards, president of the National Association of Life Underwriters, spoke on the duties and responsibilities of the insurance agent. George E. Ide, president is the Mes Life Language. spoke on the duties and responsibilities of the insurance agent. George E. Ide, presi-dent of the Home Life Insurance Company, treated the distribution of surplus to policy-holders under the insurance laws of this State. John Tatlock, president of the Washington Life, Reau E. Folk, president of the National Convention of Insurance Commissioners and M. L. Scudder all talked upon the topic Paul Morton had gone into. An adjournment was taken at 6 o'clock

SCHLESSEL SENTENCE PUT OFF. Abram I. Elkus Asks That He Get Maxi-

mum Penalty. Nathan Schlessel, who was convicted of unlawful conveyance of property before he failed for over \$200,000 in 1903, came up for sentence yesterday by Judge Foster of General Sessions. His wife and seven children were in court. His lawyer. Abe

children were in court. His lawyer, Abe Levy, asked for an adjournment until next Friday.

"That will be the thirteenth of the month," said Judge Foster.

"I'm a member of the Thirteen Club," said Mr. Levy, "but I guess I'd rather have next Thursday."

His application was granted Lawyer Abram I. Elkus, who represents the Merchants Association, which has been interested in the prosecution of Schlessel, filed a history of the case with Judge Foster. Of Schlessel Mr. Elkus said:

"He is an enemy to the business integrity of the community. Both as a proper punishment to this man for defrauding his creditors and as a warning to others to desist from the practice of a mercantile fraud, we ask in behalf of a substantial portion of the business community of the city that he be sentenced to the extreme peralty."

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